

DEKALB
CHURCH
C.O.C.
COBURN
1837-1987

62

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The Past is Prologue to the Future

Preface - 1836

One hundred fifty years! How long ago that seems. The United States was now 60 years of age. Andrew Jackson ("Old Hickory" because he was so tough) was in his final year of a two-term presidency. He had been the hero of the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. A determined and stubborn man who did not believe in a National Bank and paper currency, he had been instrumental in outlawing the validity of paper money and had ordered that metal coins were to be the only legal tender. As a result, banks were now going "broke" because they had used paper currency in great land speculations and could not obtain a sufficient amount of money to pay off creditors. A serious five year depression was at the nation's doorstep.

The great migration to the west was in full swing. Thousands were flocking into the midwest. Texas was in all the papers. Santa Ana was frantically trying to retain Mexico's hold on the territory and this was the year of his most famous triumph, the defeat and complete annihilation of 186 defenders, including Davey Crocket, at the Alamo. This did not deter the migration. In spite of fierce Indian raiding parties, the rigors of wilderness travel, lack of communication and medical help, still they traveled west.

Indiana had been a state for 20 years. Indianapolis had been chosen as the state capital in 1820 and in 1836 was incorporated as a town. The southern part was quite densely populated but due to the lack of water transportation, the northern part was only sparsely settled. In Lagrange County (from which soon the county of DeKalb was to be formed) a few hardy souls had traveled up the St. Joe River from the village of Fort Wayne and had gotten as far as the present town of Newville. John Houlton of near Hamilton had taken land from the government and had duly recorded the transaction in 1833.

In 1835, Asher and John F. Coburn had come to DeKalb County (still a part of LaGrange County) to investigate the area. They chose the southern bank of the St. Joe river as an excellent prospect for homesteading. In early 1836, they and their families made the trip by wagon to the chosen spot. They were not alone, for other families from Trumbull County, Ohio also decided to migrate into this wilderness spot and get a fresh start for themselves. What influenced this tremendous decision? Was it the scarcity of money (the Coburn brothers had \$125 and land cost only \$1.25 an acre), the lack of farmable land in eastern Ohio, or did the excitement of the "Westward Ho" fever make them venture to this new land? Anyway, come they did and thus was born what was to become the Coburn Corners community with a church at its center which was destined to influence hundreds of people from its inception to the present time.

Introduction

A History of the Church of Christ at Coburn's Corner

1837-1987

Much of this historical record was prepared by Walter H. Coburn for the centennial celebration of the church in 1937. Mr. Coburn was a grandson of John F. Coburn, about whom you will read in this history. After Walter (grown up in the first house north of the corners) had gotten his bible college training, and had preached for a time in the middle west, he returned home with his wife, Harriet and 4 sons to become the minister of the Coburn Corners Church of Christ from 1932 to 1938. He was the first of what one might call a youth minister. He was most interested in the young people and organized a high school choir, chaperoned parties, urged parents to send their children to Lake James Christian Assembly, and was a friend of all the congregation. During World War II he served as an army chaplain while his sons served in the armed services. He died in 1985 in Newton, Kansas and is buried in the Alton Cemetery.

Much of the research and organization of material other than that done by Mr. Coburn has been done by Alice Kagey, Lavon Hart, and Robert Wilder. They are descendants of one of the 1836 pioneer group, the Homer Abel family, whose home still stands on the southwest corner across from the church property.

Early Church Records

The earliest record of the church at Coburn Corners is found in a leather bound, plain ruled note book with a leather slide fastener. On the outside is lettered the words "Church Record Book". The earliest writing is in ink now faded brown but still legible. In later entries the ink is still black and easy to read. The last entry is in pencil. The date of the first entry is not known. The oldest date must have been after March 5, 1838 for it was written after the changing of the name of the township from DeKalb to Concord. This occurred on the date given above. It was probably written before July 1, 1846, for a revision is made of the roll at that date. The last entry was made in 1890.

We quote the first entry as follows:

"A record of the origin and proceedings of the Church of the Deciples (writer's spelling) in Concord Township formerly called DeKalb. (Ed. note: This township is now divided. The Alton home was in what is now Concord. The "corners" are in Spencer.)"

"In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty six, a few deciples having moved into the township from Trumbull Co., Ohio, facing (or possibly 'feeling') their obligation to God to keep his institutions and commandments and to exhibit Christianity as far as was in their power, met accordingly at the house of Benj. Alton and formed into that order which we believed the scriptures require in the month of February 1836".

The date of the organization is a point of controversy. In the history of the church written in 1894 for the anniversary the date is given as Feb. 17, 1837. It is certain that the date of Feb. 17, 1836 is incorrect for the first settlers did not arrive here until March of that year. The History of DeKalb County states that James Hadsell arrived here on March 1, 1836. John F. and Asher W. Coburn entered their land on March 9, 1836. Wilmot P. Coburn the son of John F. tells us that his father gives the date as given by Russell Coburn. (a son of Ebenezer Coburn, brother of Asher and John F. Coburn.

In the history by Russell G. Coburn, we read:

"The Christian Church at Coburns Corners was organized on the 17th day of February in the year 1837 by Elder Benjamin Alton, who was the first minister of the Gospel to locate in DeKalb County and who preached the first sermon ever preached in the county, and the church here at Coburns Corners was the first church of any denomination organized in DeKalb County."

"It was organized in the house of Brother Alton, a little log cabin, about 16 x 20, one and one half miles north of the corners on the bank of the St. Joe River".

We do not know who wrote the first entries. The only officer named was the Bishop. If the clerk or secretary was named it would probably be safe to name him as the writer. There is just one clue. Benjamin Alton Sr. is the last named male adult. This would be the natural order if he were the writer.

The second entry of an annual meeting records the election of James Hadsell as bishop in a meeting of March 1838. There is no entry for 1837 except that at the top of a page following the roll of charter members this date heads a list of names of members received. Winifred Coburn Hart states that her grandfather Charles Coburn said that when he came to the neighborhood with his father in the fall of 1836, services were being held in various homes. Among the names of those received into membership in 1837, Charles' name appears with that of his father, Ebenezer and brother, Russell G. If these men came in the fall of 1836 and the church was organized in 1837 why are they not charter members? Charles Coburn may be mistaken in the date of their arrival for their land was entered on August 15, 1837. We believe that the date Feb. 17, 1837, is the correct date. The date 1836 for a year later is a natural mistake as any letter writer will testify.

Why did they come to Indiana

This movement West is now a familiar story of American progress. They came from the "East" although their East was still "West" to their fellow Americans along the Atlantic Seaboard. They came to "better themselves" financially. They were the genuine settlers as distinguished from the squatters who formed a ragged fringe as the vanguard of civilization. They sold their farms or other possessions in the East. With loaded wagons, and perhaps some driven cattle, the move was made.

Hardships Overcome

Northern Indiana was an almost unbroken wilderness, interspersed with small prairies when the tide of immigration swept over it in the 1830's. In 1835 Asher W. Coburn made a trip to the county to select land for settlement. Probably he first visited the land office in the village of Ft. Wayne and journeyed up the river. He made the selection along the left bank. Because of his selection the little group came in 1836 to their new homes. The first few months were undoubtedly spent in strenuous toil. Land must be cleared for corn for bread. Cabins must be erected. It is said that a cabin for Asher W. Coburn was first built because of the frail health of his wife. This cabin stood across the road and a little north of the corners.

The Church is Organized

These people were faithful Christians who had been worshipping together in Trumbull County and were committed to organize themselves into a group of believers. By the winter of 1837 the most urgent labor was done, and thus the Church of the Disciples was formally organized on February 17, 1837, in a meeting in the little cabin. In the faded ink of the record we read that they-

"Unanimously appointed Benjamin Alton as Bishop of the Congregation to preach the word and administer the ordinances of the house of God. The number of the names in the origin of the church is as follows:

John F. Coburn	Minervy Coburn (wife of John F.);
Asher W. Coburn	Hannah Coburn (wife of Asher W.);
Sam'l Headly (unmarried)	James Hadsell;
Nancy Babcock (wife of Geo. Babcock)	
Benj. Alton, Jr.	Lorenzo D. Alton (Dow);
Benj. Alton, Sr.	Fanny Alton (wife of Benj.)

We must not think of these as elderly staid men. Alton was the oldest of the group and was thirty-seven, the only one born during the old century. Asher Coburn was thirty-three; John F. was thirty; James Hadsell was only twenty-three; Samuel Headley was a young unmarried man.

The group had participated in the Current Reformation. With the possible exception of James Hadsell, they had been drawn into the new movement from older groups. The four married men of the group were native to New York state of New England blood. They had participated in the gradual transformation that moved them from former firmly held and dear faiths to the new conception of the church and scriptures.

With this background, with a common conception of the church they came together and laid the foundation for a century and a half of Christian service.

After the common manner the first preaching was done by local men. Of course, Benjamin Alton, Senior, was the logical man to select at first. The next year James Hadsell, although yet quite young, was also set aside for the work of the ministry. John F. Coburn was the next called. It is not known when he was set aside but in the roll of 1846, he is listed as an evangelist. It was a number of years before he was chosen Elder.

Biographical Sketches of the Founders

The following is a brief sketch of the lives of each of these men who played such an important role in the early days of the Coburn Corner's Church of Christ.

BENJAMIN ALTON, SR.

Benjamin Alton, Sr. was 37 years of age when he located in DeKalb County in March of 1836. He was the oldest of those who had come from Trumbull County, Ohio and he was the spiritual leader of the group. He had long been a bible student and preacher but had become disillusioned with the multitude of contradictory teachings of the various denominations of his day. He had decided to withdraw with his family into seclusion and refrain from preaching. But that decision was not to be followed for long. He came in contact with Thomas Campbell and after much discussion and bible study with Mr. Campbell, he became convinced that the "Campbellite" interpretation of the scriptures was the correct one, was baptized (immersed) and became a part of this new movement called The Church of the Disciples or sometimes the Christian Connection.

The Alton family homesteaded on the southern bank of the St. Joe River near the site of the Willard Maxwell residence. A part of his land was also located on the east side of what is now known as State Road 101.

He became the first minister of the infant congregation and held that position for one year. He later moved with his family to the Newago, Michigan area, then returned to Indiana where he was an evangelist in Wabash. Both he and his wife died in 1847 and are buried in that area.

His son Cyrus, married Melvina Abel and was an evangelist in Nebraska, Kansas and Puerto Rico for many years.

In 1839, Mr. Alton deeded a parcel of land to the church for a burial ground and a church building site. (This area later was enlarged greatly by a gift from Mr. Willard Maxwell) This site still remains the Coburn Corners burial ground but retains the name of Alton Cemetery in honor of this man's great contribution to the religious growth of this community.

As illustrative of the hard conditions under which these men worked, we relate a few stories of his life. On one occasion a young man approached him with a request that he perform a marriage ceremony. The young man had the girl but no money to pay the preacher. Like all other pioneers, money to him was a novelty. The young man suggested that he could bring a load of pumpkins for pay as he had a fine crop of them. The ceremony was performed and in the course of a few days the happy bridegroom brought the pumpkins.

It is told, on reliable authority, that he was seen on at least one occasion, while walking to a preaching appointment at Hicksville, Ohio, with his feet clad one in a boot, the other in a lace shoe. The journey was then perhaps ten miles because of intervening swamps. The shoe and boot were made on the old last - they would fit either foot. He explained that the mates were worn out. There is another tradition - whether true or not, we do not know - that for seven weeks he journeyed from place to place living in various homes and

preaching where opportunity afforded. During the seven weeks period he received in money thirty-five cents or five cents a week. The explanation is there was no money. It was at the sacrifice of such men that the gospel was spread in those times.

JAMES HADSELL

James Hadsell, the second of the ministers of this infant congregation was 23 years old when he came to Indiana and was already a baptized believer. He had been a school teacher in Ohio with the magnificent salary of \$10 a month. He did follow that profession but became a farmer as well. He had been married in Ohio in March 1835 and his oldest son, Byron, was the second white child born in the county. Although James Hadsell was a preacher and a farmer, these active interests did not interfere with other lines of work. He taught school, served in the state legislature and was active in recruitment during the Civil War. He was a natural leader of men. The one church could not hold him. There are several records of removals by letter of him and his wife but the exact dates cannot be determined. Once he removed to Trumbull County and later returned. He lived in Kendallville and served the church there. Later he organized a church in Waterloo and became its minister. At one time in order to give his children the advantage of an academy education he moved to Newville and sent them to the academy founded and directed by Faurot there. He is credited with the organization of the church at Newville. The date of organization indicates that he did this while still a resident at Coburn Corners. (His home was located where Ted Hansen now lives)

Death came to him while he was in Waterloo, Sept. 17, 1876. He was carried by his friends to the Alton Cemetery near his first Indiana home and there laid to rest. He was the father of eight children. Those who remember him testify that he was a preacher who could move men to repentance. Evidently of a restless disposition, he was truly ambitious - desiring to serve his community, his church and his country.

JOHN F. COBURN

The third minister of the Church of Disciples was John F. Coburn, who with his brother, Asher and their families came to Indiana early in 1836. John F. was 30 years of age at that time.

There is no record of his education or even of any movements except that from a paper, he states that he was a resident in Warren in 1828 where he was running a shoe shop. It is probable that he was apprenticed there. When Walter Scott made his famous "seige of Warren" he was present. In this manuscript written in 1876 he tells of his vivid memory of the long, bony hand of Walter Scott as he told on his fingers the "steps to conversion". Thus, he was a part of the unfolding drama of the beginning of the "current reformation". His first reaction was that Scott was preaching dangerous doctrine.

In 1836 he came to Indiana and entered the farm one-half mile west of the Coburn Corners Church. He was a charter member as we have noted. When the county was organized he was elected clerk and recorder and for a time lived in Auburn, although he seems to have retained his membership in the Coburns Church. In 1842 he resigned and returned to the farm. With the exception of a temporary residence in Trumbull County, he lived in the neighborhood until

his death but had moved to the Coburn farm on which the church now stands.

His progress in the church is not given. In 1846 the revised roll lists his name first as "evangelist". There is no record of his appointment. It was probably after 1842, owing to his absence previous to that time. In 1865 he was appointed Elder. There is no former record although old residents declare he served earlier in this capacity.

He was married three times. First to Minerva Trumbull on Nov. 25, 1830. Three children were born to this union. Minerva Coburn died Oct. 3, 1840. On July 11, 1841, he married Alzada Gay who died March 28, 1850. After the death of his second wife he returned to Trumbull County and there married a third time, on April 20, 1852. His third wife was Betsy Ann Wilmot. One son was born to this union, Wilmot P. Since he was not expecting to return, he took his letter from the church and again joined in 1853 upon his return. He was then elected deacon and a little later renewed his license as an evangelist. He died in 1879.

After his death he was buried in the cemetery not far from the spot where his co-laborer in the gospel, James Hadsell, lies. His final illness came in the form of apoplexy while he was standing in the pulpit "exhorting".

He possessed a frock coat and top hat but wore them only on formal occasions such as a "yearly meeting" or convention. He clung to the "barn door trousers" as they were called. These trousers were made like the modern U.S. sailors' trousers. He had been presented with a cane or two but preferred a long staff instead. His light at night was a candle lantern. At the risk of spending too much time with this kindly country philosopher and theologian we tell two authenticated stories which the people used to love to tell.

At one time he was preaching in a cabin home. He stood so as to face an open door. Outside the door was the ever present "swill barrel" which contained kitchen refuse for the hogs. During the sermon, a hen flew to the rim of the barrel to peck at the dainties floating on the surface. She ventured to reach too far out and lost her balance and fell in. John F. noticed her plight and said abruptly, "There's a chicken in the swill barrel". He walked out, removed the hen, returned to his place in the cabin to finish his sermon.

In his later years his hair became quite thin so that flies worried him as he sat in the church. It was his custom at such times to cover his head with a Bandana handkerchief of the brilliant hues of the time. One day he arose to preach and forgot the fly protector. His wife sat in front of him much embarrassed and trying to make him understand what was wrong. After a time she became desperate and went up to him and removed the handkerchief. As she handed it to him he said, "So that's what those signs meant. I thought my hair was mussed".

The Story Continues

The religious life of these three men had been vitalized by a plea that thrilled them to their very souls. For there come to them strong Christian and experienced preachers who knew the despair that can come to one who has lost his sense of the presence of God. The church was born, not on February 17, 1837, but in the hearts of worthy men at the preaching of some of the

greatest preachers who ever stood in an American pulpit. (This alludes to Thomas Campbell and Walter Scott).

During the year of 1837, twenty-two members were added. All but three came from Ohio bringing their letters. Thus the little group was tripled in membership in the first few months. The next spring witnessed the beginning of the work of James Hadsell. It seems that these men were appointed for life or good behavior. The office was purely a congregational decision; however.

Early Church Discipline

Another feature of church life was the manner of discipline. At the yearly meeting of the congregation any of the older members of the congregation were privileged to call to the attention of the congregation certain members who were delinquent. Three members, including Lorenzo D. Alton (Dow) were excluded. Two years later young Alton was restored. Indeed, that was the usual result of disfellowship. This strictness was probably an inheritance from the Baptists for in many Baptist churches of the time there were more excluded in a given year than there were admitted. At the same time it must be noted that many things were accepted as definitely sinful that are now at least tolerated by the church.

Later at an annual meeting in 1878 there arose a problem which resulted in the last case of church discipline recorded. We quote from the church record dated February 10th 1877: "At a business meeting of above date the following action was taken by the Disciple congregation meeting at Coburns, DeKalb County, Indiana," There were the names of a number of persons brought before the church for discipline and the name of Hiram Northup taken off the record at his own request and by vote of the congregation. The meeting was adjourned to meet in three months from that day. "May 10th 1877, the adjourned of Feb. 10th 1877 and the following were to be dropped from the Church record". Here follows a list of names. It would do no good to list them here. They were all young people who had offended the common understanding of what was fit for Christian life. The story told is that on the first meeting the young people were put on trial but that for the first time they chose to remain defiant. Most of them came back into the church, some to take prominent part and to become honored members.

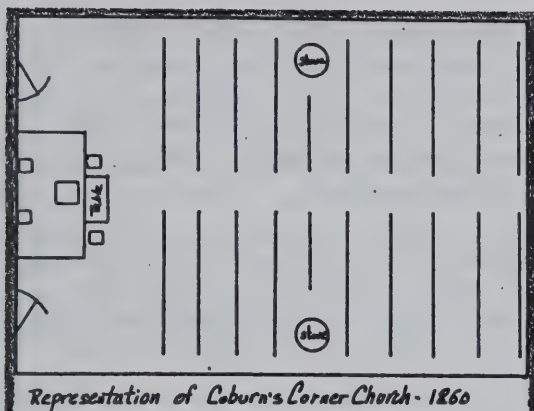
The church grew slowly but by 1846 there was a revision of the rolls and the number was sixty-three; in 1859 there were eighty-five.

The next revision of the church roll was made in 1874 and the number of communicants was found to be one hundred and two.

Building for God's Glory

The first meeting places of the Coburn Corners Church were held in the various cabins of the members of the congregation or at times the meetings were held in either the Cheesetown or Coburn schools. But by 1860 the need of a separate place of worship was necessary so a small frame building was erected on the corner of what is now State Road 101 and County Road 64.

The first building was humble of rectangular shape running north and south. Two doors were at the south end, one for women, girls, and small children and



one for men and boys. A small platform was erected between the doors to hold the pulpit. Later the east door was closed and the platform extended to the east wall to make room for a choir. Four windows were on each side and two rows of pews extended to the back. One row of pews were for women and girls and the other side was for men and boys. Two stoves were positioned half way to the back one on either side of the room.

We must also relate that some of the men were addicted to the use of chewing tobacco and that some of them indulged in its use during the church service. The floor and stove suffered in consequence. One old gentleman in particular, was accustomed to sitting in a certain spot so that the floor near him was stained brown. Those who knew him, testify that he was one of the saintliest of men, patient, quiet, elder of the church and honoring the office if any mortal can do so.

Later an organ was brought in by Mr. Byron Hadsell, the choir director, to aid the choir and he was ordered to remove it immediately. But not much later, the congregation decided that the organ was indeed an aid in the worship services. So the organ became a part of the church furnishings.

Changing social customs crept into the church. What a craning of necks and rustles of disapproval must have greeted the first couple who sat down together upon one side of the church. Was it a young man and his sweetheart or a bride and groom? Whoever it was had brave spirits within them. Did young men and women maneuver to sit beside each other at the division line - young man sitting sedately on the men's side and young woman on the other?

There is evidence that attendance at the evening service was greater than today but we must remember that there were more people in the country communities than now, particularly the younger people, and that there were fewer places to go. Church services were not only religious events, but social events as well. One of the great strengths of the congregation has been its recognition of social needs.

This building served the congregation well for forty years then progress demanded change. The building was much too small. There were no classrooms, no storage space, special programs could no longer accomodate the crowds, and Sunday Schools were becoming popular. Something must be done and again the Christian people at the Corners started to plan.

In May of 1903 the second structure of the Coburn Corners Church was dedicated and the transformation was a definite improvement. A basement had been dug, the old 1860 building had been turned halfway around to be used as the main auditorium with two wings on the north and south added. The south wing provided additional seating and on the west corner a small foyer with a bell tower above. The north wing consisted of a raised platform which held two upholstered pulpit chairs, a piano and a small pulpit. (This antique pulpit today serves as a stand for the church guest book in the foyer of the 1979 building). A larger pulpit was purchased later. (This pulpit is used in the

Junior Church area now). To the left of the rostrum was a door which led to the stairway to the basement.

The basement had a kitchen and a large open area where classes could be held or the area could serve as a dining room. The church was originally heated by stoves in the auditorium but a furnace was installed soon after.

The main auditorium had three groups of curved, walnut pews, the center group set in the shape of a fan and the two side groups were placed as a half-fan. Each pew had to be put in its own place for no two pews were identically shaped. The communion table stood on the floor directly in front of the pulpit.

Three large arch-shaped windows were on the west, east and south sides. Two smaller ones were at the back of the rostrum and the other small ones were in the northwest and southeast corners. The building was faced with red brick. This brick possibly was purchased from Washington Hart who operated a brick making business south of the church.

The people were jubilant. At last Coburn Corners had a beautiful and adequate facility for the worship services. Surely this building should serve for many years!

More Progress, More Change

In 1943 the auditorium was replastered and the pews were refinished. What a day that was! The pews were scattered about the lawn and industrious Christians were busily engaged in loving labor with varnish remover and rags, hammers and nails, then brushes and varnish. No longer would clothing stick to the pews in the hot, muggy summer months.

In 1955 another addition was added toward the east. This two-story structure contained an office and a classroom on the second floor. The first floor contained a large classroom which could be opened to enlarge the auditorium, a storage area, bathrooms, and a new stairway to the basement, where there was a nursery and room for a pre-school department. A baptistry was built where the original steps had been just to the east of the rostrum.

"What next?" was probably in the minds of many in the congregation. Surely this building should last for many years.

The 1979 Building

In 1974 a committee was appointed to investigate the possibility of a new structure. Attendance was high enough that those attending were quite crowded. Also, the old church was plagued by many problems. The slate roof leaked in spite of numerous repairs, the basement became very wet after almost every rain, the need for a larger fellowship area was evident, and a more complete kitchen was required. The building was drafty and was very expensive to heat and air-condition. But the most serious problem was that, as the result of a car-truck accident at the corner, the building had been shaken by the force of the car as it was hurtled into the corner of the church. The foundation was affected and the bell tower was shaken so that it could no longer support the bell, and it was feared that the tower might collapse. Remodeling was not the answer. A new house of worship must be erected.

Additional land was purchased from the Coburn Family, an architectural firm was contacted and a lovely new facility was dedicated to God's service in 1979 with plans for further expansion when needed.

The building and grounds are not yet complete. Additional hard-top parking area is needed, as well as a playground for youngsters, additional storage space, landscaping, as well as many other identified needs. All of these and more will come about in the future because this congregation is alive and well and is hopefully looking forward to a bright future, knowing that what has been accomplished will lead to greater achievements in the name of the Lord.

Only memories now remain of the old structures but the memories of the former church building remain strong in the hearts of many touched by its presence in the years gone by.

The Church in the War Years

When the Civil war came, this neighborhood, like all others, furnished its share of men for the army. It is hard for us today to realize how much the War affected the lives and thoughts of those who remained behind. Many "boys in blue" left for the army during those years. On the church rolls five are marked with these words, "killed in action" or "died in the army". These five were: Benny Robe, Henry Monroe, Harvey Ackley, Edward W. Flint, Edward Rupert. We cannot give a complete list of the men who went away and came back but every person of forty years or more has a distinct memory of the colors, firing squad and bugler, and sometimes the martial band which led the procession for Memorial Day.

The war wrought destruction other than upon the bodies of young men. During the course of the great conflict, feelings were brought to a high pitch of excitement so that sober judgement was swept aside. In the year 1864 we find these words written after the names of two men, "excluded because of war ideas". In all five people were excluded at this time, perhaps all for this one thing: Eighteen-sixty-four was the year of the bitter political campaign between McClellan and the Democratic party against Lincoln and the Union Party. It was exceedingly bitter; all the mistakes of the conduct of the war, the highly wrought feelings of the supporters of Lincoln and the seeming hopelessness of the situation brought, destruction of the Christian spirit. Just what the trouble was is not known certainly, but since two of the group were known to have been staunch Democrats, it is safe to conjecture that the war ideas mentioned was that advocated by the Democratic party, recognition of the Confederacy and a conference looking toward some sort of union with slavery and states rights guaranteed. Of course, the northern victories changed the whole picture and the trouble passed. When we remember that perhaps every family in the church was in some way represented in the active service we can understand the tension of the church at this time. At least one of these men later became a loyal member and was honored by the Office of Elder.

Funeral of J. O. Coburn

The following newspaper article was published in a DeKalb County newspaper (identity unknown) approximately May 16, 1864.

Died -- in the thirty-third year of his age, at the prison hospital in Richmond, Virginia, March 8th, 1864, Q. M. Sergeant Jacob Osburn Coburn, Co. I, 6th Michigan cavalry, of Big Rapids, Mercorta county, Michigan, eldest son of Elder John F. Coburn, of DeKalb county, Indiana. The cause and circumstances of his death are shown in the following letter from his fellow prisoner and death-bed companion, Albert S. Patrick of New York, to the father of the deceased:

"Your son fell a victim to the inhuman cruelty and barbarous treatment of our captors, and I do not overstate the truth when I say that he literally starved to death on Belle Isle. He came to the prisoners' hospital on the 14th of February, sick with chronic diarrhea. I was acting Stewart at the time, and when he came in, noticed he was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, and soon made his acquaintance. I furnished him every comfort possible under the circumstances, and he so far recovered as to come down stairs and try to do my writing. I felt greatly encouraged in regard to his case, and cheered him all I could, but three days had not passed before he relapsed, and in forty-eight hours was dead. His system was completely worn out and nature could not rally. To give you some idea of how fearfully emaciated he was, I will tell you that his ankle was far larger than his thigh, and his hip bones protruded through the skin."

"His mind was clear up to his latest breath and he conversed in regard to his approaching end, calmly, and I never before saw a man to whom death had so few horrors; and whenever I think of him, I pray my last end may be like his."

"Three thousand of our men are filling prisoners' graves in Richmond, and this since September 30th, '63. I am in possession of facts and figures taken from the hospital records, that, if compiled in shape, would cause the entire civilized world to cry out, 'Shame on the abortion of a Davis Government'. What think you of 10 oz. of bread, made of unsifted meal, 2 oz. of poor beef and one pint of black pea soup, without the peas, as a ration for a convalescent sick man? By ration, I mean twenty-four hours supply of food."

The funeral services were conducted by Elder James Hadsell, at the Christian Church in the Coburn settlement, in Concord, DeKalb County, Indiana, May 1st, 1864.

Excitement did not run so high in the Spanish American War (1898) but several from this community participated actively at this time.

World War I again saw Coburn Corners' young men going to war. Several served not only in the active battles but some remained in Europe after the Armistice to keep the peace that had been so bitterly won.

Again in the early 1940's the United States called many of the Coburn Corners finest to serve. Perhaps even more from here participated in the armed forces than had joined the Union Army during the Civil War. In many homes a flag with one or more gold stars hung in a front window to attest that this home had sent a loved one into service. Fortunately, none of our local service men were required to sacrifice their lives in battle.

The Korean and Vietnam conflicts again required that some of our youth serve. Look about you as you sit in the church and you will see quite a few veterans of these and World War II serving in God's army.

Today we still have young men and women serving in the armed forces.

Coburn Corners Church of Christ has a long history of patriotic service. The names of all those who have served cannot be written here but following is the honor roll of those veterans who are buried in Alton Cemetery and whose memory we honor on Memorial Day each year. Others of our own lie in other places and they too are honored in that vicinity and in our memory here.

Veterans Buried in Alton Cemetery

War of 1812 - Daniel Abel, Ebenezer Coburn

Civil War - Henry Abel, David Andress, J. O. Coburn, Henry Milliman, John Milliman, Mortimer Milliman, Warren Milliman, Curtis Perry, George Trostel

Spanish-American War - Arthur Woodcox

World War I - Donald Ayers, Lester Coburn, Walter Coburn (also WWII), Milo Frain, George Hart Sr., Owen Headley (died on board ship on way home), Roy Maxwell, Paul Perry, Wilbur Perry, Lehr Wilder, George Winkler

World War II - Cecil (Jim) Brand, Paul Coburn, Wilbur Coburn, Otha Greenfield, George Hart Jr., Paul Hensley, William Hubbard, Harold Inlow, Harold Kagey, William Means, Gerald Miller, Frank Taylor, Robert Wade, Mark Stuck, Doris Stuck

Korean War - Earle Kelsey

Peace-time Army - Wayne Gee

God's Army - Our Timothys

Many faithful teachers, elders, deacons and other workers who received their early training here at Coburn Corners can be found serving in many congregations over this country. We are proud of our full- and part-time workers that have been sent forth to "preach the Word unto all the World." Benjamin Alton, James Hadsell, John F. Coburn, Cyrus Alton, L.L. Carpenter, Edwin R. Coburn, J. N. Scholes, Walter Coburn (these are all deceased); Darris D. Hamilton, Annamae Leavell Adams, Carleton Curie (ordained July 3, 1955), Richard Haines (ordained April 16, 1962), Wendell Hose and Leslie Strong (ordained May 3, 1970), Lynn Hart (ordained November 22, 1981), and Rick Alvey (ordained May 18, 1986). At present we have three young men in Great Lakes Bible College. They have not yet decided on their future course. These are Gilbert Alicea and Kevin and Steven Weber.

Our Ministers

No record has been kept of all of the separate ministeries. During the earlier years the ministers who came here were undergirded by the presence of James Hadsell or John F. Coburn or both. The latter was here during all the time until his death. When no one was serving the church, Coburn was always present with his high type of preaching. Later J. N. Scholes located in the community and helped serve the congregation until his untimely death at a regular church service. Those who were called for regular work here are listed as follows:

1837	Benjamin Alton
1838	James Hadsell
1846	John F. Coburn
	R. G. Coburn
	Bonham
	Banford
	R. Ransom
	T. P. Sutton
	R. Faurott
	Leavitt
	Bonnell
	Sweetman
	Teagarden
	Oviatt
	Jewell
	T. A. Hedges
	J. A. Thomas
	Harris
	L. W. Fairfield
	*J. O. Rose (note: * means they served more than once.)
	John Dunkleberger
	W. S. Meyers
	F. A. Thomas
1909	J. A. Brown (Feb. 2, 1909)
1911	A. M. Gillespie
1914	*J. O. Rose
1916	L. N. Spade
1920	T. A. Manly
1922	Dailey
1929	Joseph N. Scholes
1932	Walter H. Coburn (Apr. 26, 1938)
1939	Richard Key (June 3, 1939 - Apr. 29, 1941)
1941	Erby Messimer (Sept. 6, 1941 - Feb. 12, 1944)
1944	William Clague (Apr. 1, 1944 - July 1945)
1945	Johnnie Lee Sennett (Sept. 8, 1945 - Sept. 11, 1949)
1950	Darris Hamilton (Jan. 1, 1950 - Aug. 17, 1952)
1952	Wilmer Ballou (Nov. 2, 1952 - Nov. 27, 1955)
1956	J. W. Mellick (Jan. 1, 1956 - May 31, 1957)
1957	*John Paul Hill (June 23, 1957 - June 20, 1965)
1965	Marvin Biery (Oct. 3, 1965 - May 1969)
1969	Larry Smith (Aug. 18, 1969 - Nov. 1972)
1973	Larry Carter (Mar. 4, 1973 - Feb. 1977)
1977	*John Paul Hill (May 1, 1977 - Aug. 1980)
1981	Douglas Holley (June 1981)

Our Elders

1837	Benjamin Alton	1924	Abner Trostell
	James Hadsel	1925	William Maxwell
1842	John F. Coburn	1931	Louis Washler
1843	Samuel Headley	1933	Marvin Poper
1849	Benjamin Alton, Jr	1937	J. N. Scholes.
	John H. Coburn	1940	Elwood Hart
1850	Thomas Sawyer	1942	Clarence Woodcox
1851	Daniel Shull	1943	John Crothers
1856	George W. Wilmot	1947	John Cook
	Russel G. Coburn	1950	Karl Hart
1858	Lemuel Flint	1953	Chester Davis, Jr.
1862	George Wilmot	1955	Gerald Rediger
1863	Samuel Flint		Ralph Waggoner
1867	Henry Milliman		Harold Kagey
1871	Byron Hadsell	1958	Merwin Place
1873	Asa Hall James		Earl Bice
	M. Milliman	1962	Merle Coburn
	John Murphy	1964	Virgil Smith
1874	David Andress	1966	Lavon Hart
	John Scholes	1970	Harold Curie
(information gap)		1973	Harry Strong
1910	Reed Place	1977	Bill Hart
	Wesley Hart	1979	Lanny Huss
	Charles Tustison	1980	Mark Strong
	Clyde Hart		Robert Wilder
1915	Cal Coburn	1981	Bill Burton
	Saxe Hadsell	1983	John Ater
1919	Floyd Coburn	1987	Tom Gollmer
1923	Claude Laub		

Our Deacons

1910	Wilmot Coburn	1927	Glen Hart
	Saxe Hadsell	1928	Merwin Place
	Fred Hart	1930	Estel Coburn
	Earl Tustison	1931	Roy Mann
	H. A. Coburn	1933	Elwood Hart
	John Hart		Claude Mason
1915	Ora Quance	1935	Geo. Milliman
	Dell Coburn	1937	Kenneth Coburn
	Elba Wilmot	1940	John Crothers
	W. P. Coburn		Paul Carpenter
1917	Merritt Maxwell	1941	Dale Trostel
	William Denhem	1942	Garth Shull
	Hiram Todd		Harold Furnish
1919	W. F. Maxwell	1943	Harold Kagey
1920	Meade Baker		James A. Hart
	Alvy Perry	1944	Roy Maxwell
1923	Louis Washler		John Cook
1924	Elmer Volkert	1945	Ralph Waggoner
	Roy Maxwell		Merle Coburn
1926	Karl Hart		

1947	Arthur Knop	1972	Mark Strong
1948	Ralph Hook		Andy Crow
	Arvil Brown		Lanny Huss
1949	Harry Strong	1973	Galen Hose
	Chester Davis, Jr.	1974	Bill Hablawetz
	Eugene Hook		Lee Shifler
1950	Onan Laughman	1975	Ron Beard
1951	Lavon Hart		Jim Morrison
1952	Howard Paff	1976	Marvin Hoot
1953	Harold Goldsmith		Doug Miller
	Robert Witt	1977	Kent Strong
	Gerald Rediger	1978	Roger Coburn
1955	Harold Curie	1979	Bill Burton
	Frank Laub	1981	Gary Hart
	Earl Bice		Lynn Hart
1956	Max Ward	1982	Dan Corwin
	Wilmer Hook		John Ater
1957	John Riffell	1983	Bob Antrup
	Virgil Smith		Richard Musser
	Carleton Wilmot		Dan Corwin
1961	Gene Mann		Dennis Hart
1964	Earl Goldsmith		Jim Rediger
1966	Loren Inlow		Ed Chambers
	Bill Hart	1984	Tom Gollmer
1969	Sam Barkman	1985	Randy Bungard
	Floyd Palmer		Ernie Barrett
1970	Robert Jarrett	1987	Rick Alvey
	Dick Miller		Corwin Parkinson
1971	Jerry Emenhiser		
	John Sechler		

Bible Study Programs

No church can exist without an educational program whether the program be formally worked out or developed informally. Like most of the schools of its size the work has been confined, in a formal way to the Bible School, although, at times, week day classes have been held. It is not known just when the Sunday School began but it has been conducted for many years. At first the school was conducted in the warm months but soon it was discovered that a winter school was also successful. Today the school is graded in its lower classes. It is impossible to give a complete list of Superintendents or even a near complete list as no formal records have been kept of the school.

Until 1941 the Bible School classes met for the lesson in various places in the church. From Junior High to the "Dead End Kids (because we have no place else to go but up!" - the oldest age group) met in the auditorium and sixth grade and lower met in the basement. When these children come up for the church service, the song that was usually sung was "Bring Them In"! (quite appropriate!) In 1941 a new Junior Bible School program spearheaded and planned by Ellen Hart and John Crothers, was started. The children went directly to the basement after arriving on Sunday morning and their program of singing, prayers, memorization and classes lasted through the adult Bible school hour.

In 1953 mid-week services were started with both an adult and a school-age department.

Several years later a Junior Church program was instituted and all children through grade six had their entire Sunday program in the basement. Donna Mae Davis and Ramona Hill developed this program in approximately 1961.

A new youth program was started in 1976. Spearheaded by the efforts of Melanie Strong and Lora Hart, the Jesus and Me (J.a.M.) Wednesday night program was begun. It still continues as an active youth outreach program for the congregation.

The bible school classes now are:

Truth Seeker
Home Builders
Christian Companions
Koinonia
Adelphos
High School
Junior Bible School classes
Pre-school classes
Nursery

Missions

There are few records concerning the missionary giving of the church in the early years but in the early 1940's a group of women began to meet together monthly for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with the Church of Christ missionary efforts around the world. There were probably less than 100 missionaries from the Church of Christ laboring either in the states or in foreign lands. Giving for missions needed to be emphasized so the Junior Bible School department started telling stories of missionary adventures and taking up special offerings. The church then agreed to support Julius and Salomi Yafat in India (about 1952), after hearing Tom and Leota Rash (missionaries from India) tell of their need. The next step was to make each quarter a separate missionary emphasis time having special speakers from their field of labor speak and then they became the recipient of the weekly missionary offering taken during Bible School. Gradually the interest in missions grew and expanded into several fields of service. For several years missionary giving through the church has been 12-16% of the total giving.

By congregational approval in 1968 the Coburn Corners Church disassociated itself legally from the United Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and officially became one of a huge group of independent churches loosely banded together by the North American Christian Convention, the National Missionary Convention, the support of our bible colleges, and the direct support to missionaries. Each church is independent in that it conducts its own business without direction of any other agency and is answerable only to God.

Conclusion

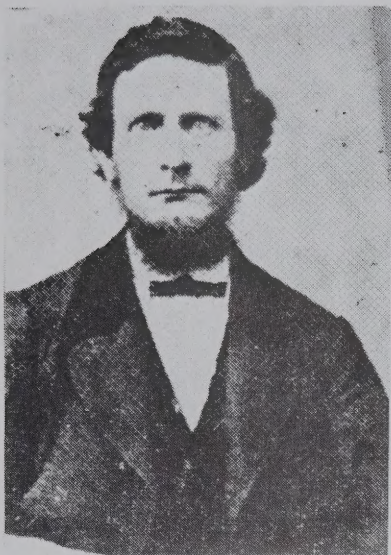
To complete this historical narrative the ending words of Walter Coburn in the 1937 history will be used in its entirety.

"As a final word we wish to pay tribute to the church for one outstanding factor in its long history. It has never allowed a quarrel to dominate the situation. Whatever trouble has arisen has been overcome and really there has never been a long continued difference in the church. There are no social classes. The members are self respecting individuals who are determined to build a neighborhood life that is Christian in character."

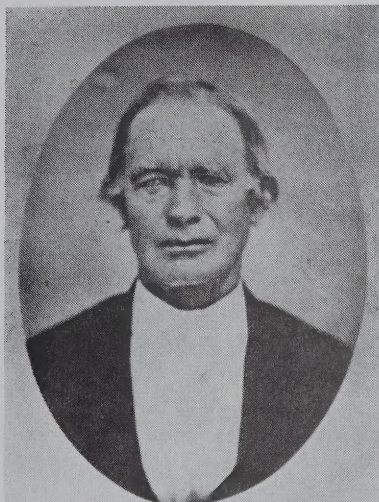
"R.G. Coburn concludes his historical sketch thus, 'The church has had its ups and downs, its dark times and its bright times; at times it seemed to be on the decline and then again it would revive and take on new life, but in all its history it has never failed to meet for worship of every first day of the week without special cause.'"

"The church is alive to its responsibilities today. It is vigorous and awake. In the first year of its second century it pauses to look back but its face is turned toward the future. In 1837 our fathers pioneered in a new country and solved, in a first rate manner, its problems. In 1937, we pioneer in a new age. We have our problems. With faith in God the congregation believes it can meet these problems. The little group in Alton's cabin could not see the century ahead but it came and the church prospered. We do not see the future but we go on in faith."

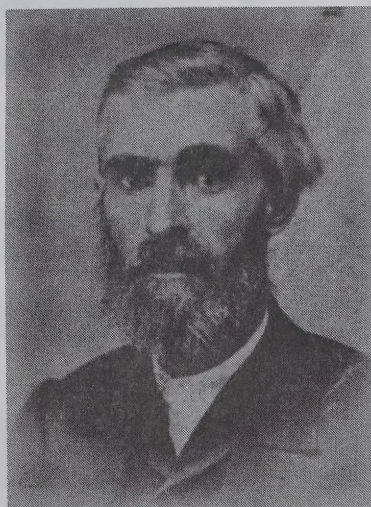
And all the people say "AMEN!" in 1987.



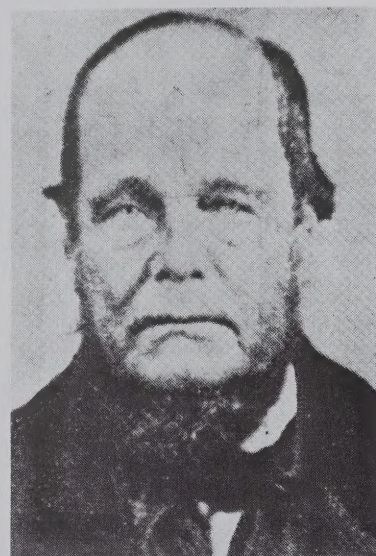
Benjamin Alton



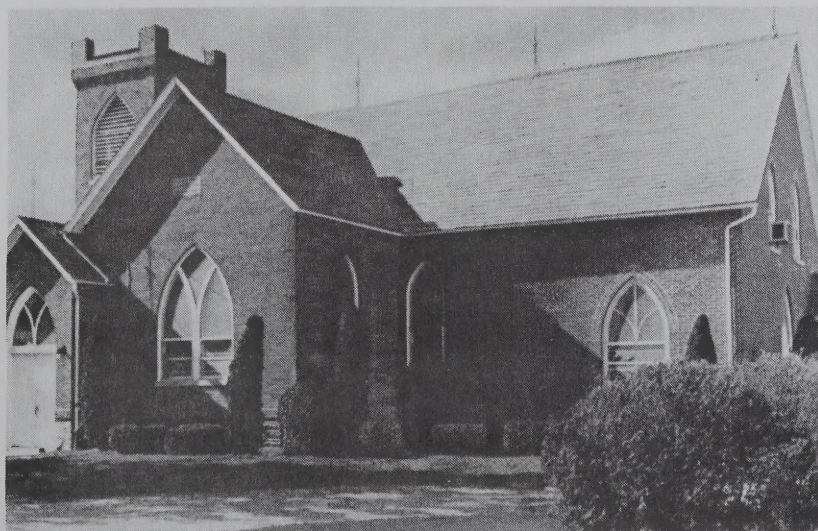
John F. Coburn



James Hadsell



Asher Coburn



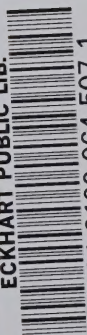


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